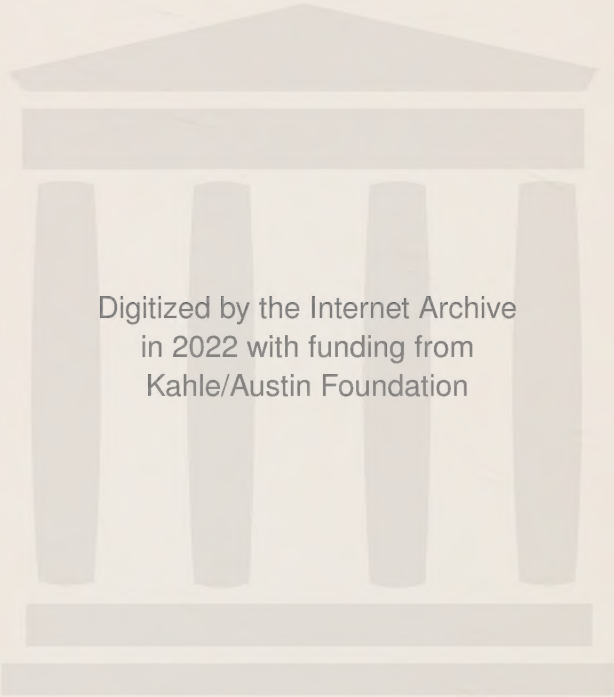


Well, what is teaching?

perspectives on the teaching-learning process





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WELL, WHAT IS TEACHING?

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Perspectives on the Teaching-Learning Process

Edited by
Dale E. Griffin

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Preface

A colleague of mine has written a fine book entitled *How You Too Can Teach*. The fact is that you not only *can* teach but that you *do* teach—in a thousand different ways and settings. As Gilbert Highet wrote some years ago:

Every father and mother do an astonishing amount of teaching. Their lessons cover the entire universe, from “Where Is God?” to the use of soap, and have a lifetime effect Husbands and wives also teach each other and learn from each other Doctors can cure people by chemical and surgical interference, but they can only keep them well by teaching them The Christian church has been best in those periods when it took its mission of teaching most seriously, and its priests still show their noblest side when they teach us how to bear what must be borne In public life, on a larger but shallower scale, there are many men who use the techniques of teaching although they may not think of themselves as teachers. Advertising men have grasped some of these essential methods more firmly than many professional educators The wisest of the Greeks used to say that a politician was bound to be a teacher Like politicians, authors and artists are teachers, because they persuade the public. (*The Art of Teaching* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950], pp. 264–82 *passim*)

Teaching, then, is vastly more than expounding a body of knowledge to a group of students in a formal setting. The teaching-learning process is a complicated, dynamic interplay of people that is in constant motion. In a thousand subtle ways we continually teach those who observe us what we truly believe.

Also the teacher in a Christian church school needs to be somewhat aware of the true character of the teaching-learning process if he is to communicate the faith as God wants it to be shared. The grumbler teaches in effect that God is not good or that He is capricious at best. The person who is prone to be vengeful and mean is not doing effective work in communicating the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ. In brief, we teach quite as much by what we are as by what we say.

To introduce you to some of the subtleties of the teaching-learning process, we have brought together in this volume a collection of essays concerning the nature of teaching. These have been grouped in three major categories.

Teaching, first, is that which reflects the person of the instructor. As the teacher relates to other people, he consciously or unconsciously reveals his true values and beliefs. The instructor teaches more effectively what he is than what he says.

Second, *how* the teacher responds to his students is even more important than what he says to them. To teach the Gospel of God's love in Christ, the whole teaching-learning process must be characterized by acceptance and respect of the individual, by love for people with all their faults and foibles, and by regard for the integrity of the student as a redeemed child of God.

Finally, to relate the Gospel to the actual needs of the student, the teacher must listen as well as speak. Teaching is a dialog. By dialog we mean much more than discussion. A group of people may discuss a topic without revealing their true thoughts and feelings. Talk can even be a device used to hide one's true self for fear of ridicule or reprisal. Dialog demands an open, accepting climate in which God's people can freely express their true selves without fear of recrimination or rejection. Through honest dialog misunderstandings

can be removed, new insights can be gained, and meaningful learning can take place.

The essays in this volume originally appeared in *Interaction*, a monthly magazine for church school workers. I am deeply indebted to its editors, Allan H. Jahsmann, Paul H. Pallmeyer, and Nancy Corbett, both for their initial editing and for their permission to include these articles in this book. Above all, the authors themselves deserve the gratitude of us all for sharing their insights with the church.

We will feel well rewarded if your reading of this volume increases your understanding of the teaching-learning process and leads you to become a better communicator of God's good news in Jesus Christ.

DALE E. GRIFFIN

General Editor

Teaching as Self-Expression

In His wisdom God not only endowed mankind with the Sacred Scriptures but He also established a teaching community—the Christian church—through whom the words of Scripture are to be shared with men. Men are to know God because His people live their lives in harmony with the words of Scripture. As St. Paul put it: “You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” (2 Cor. 3:2-3 RSV)

In our first essay W. Theophil Janzow describes how the words of Scripture are communicated by Christians who themselves are a word from God. In the succeeding two articles Frederick Nohl points out that we teach God’s good words also through our methods, our attitudes, our behavior, and the quality of our relationships with our students.

Able Teachers of the Word

W. Th. Janzow

Teachers whose mouths are filled with holy words, Bible words, Christian words surely aren't using dirty words. Or are they? What if those words are covered with tradition-bound interpretation, mechanical meaninglessness, human prejudice, and dark explanations or false applications? The "Word made flesh" itself is pure, but if the clean Word is covered up, hidden in the morass of the foolishness of the teacher so that the light doesn't get through, what then?

Words are communicators, and education is communication. The great thing about Christian education is that it deals with words about the Word—or, more precisely, it deals *with* the Word, the Word in which all other words find their origin and ultimate truth because this Word is Christ—this Word is God. And this Word, like words, is also a communicator. This Word comes, speaks, explains, tells, communicates, shares, gives, receives, interacts, lives with, loves, helps, understands, has compassion, gets angry, punishes, defends, lifts up, promises, redeems, saves.

This Word, like words, is communicated in and through a community. This Word came to us because we are a community, that is, we are meant for togetherness. We are meant to be together with God, and we are meant to be together with one another. The togetherness became separateness through sin. But the Word came to tie us together again, to build a body, to restore a community between man and God and between man and man.

If Christ is *the Word*, then each Christian teacher is *a word*. Maybe that's the biggest lesson Christian teachers have to learn: Christ communicated God. That was His nature. Christian teachers in being Christian communicate God. That is their nature. All Christians are *a word* because their Christ is the Word.

But what happens when a teacher teaches the Word with his mouth, when he transmits it with his lips so that his pupils hear it, but he himself is not a word? When he's just *speaking* words and not *being* a word? Because he's only speaking and not being, the words that are clean may come out dirty and may injure, mislead, repel, and destroy instead of help and heal and save.

E. O. Melby, education professor at Michigan State University, said: "The biggest trouble with teachers working with culturally deprived children is that they don't like culturally deprived children." They say: "I don't like these children, but I don't tell them." He said: "Don't kid yourself; you're telling them." Christ's teachers of Christ teach Christ to their students by the Word they are as well as by the Word they speak with their mouths.

However, if we don't recognize the Holy Spirit as indispensable in the educational efforts of our Christian schools, we have thrown in the towel before the first punch. The Holy Spirit must teach the teachers of the Word and through the teachers teach the pupils who are taught. Jesus said to His followers: "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), and He often said: "The Son can do nothing of His own accord" (John 5:19, 30, etc.). God, our Father, through His Spirit, the Comforter, must teach through us (John 14:26) if God's work is to be accomplished for Christ and His church.

Teaching Without Teaching

One of the most serious temptations of a Christian teacher is not to teach in the Christian way. To teach in a Christian

way, however, does not mean to supply mere Bible and catechism facts or religious talk. It does not mean that you have to answer every question with a Bible passage. The Christian teacher can no longer follow the method of the poet who said: "Ram it in, Jam it in, Students heads are hollow. Ram it in, Jam it in, There's plenty more to follow."

Both pastors and teachers are prone to oversimplify Christian education. In an amusing cartoon a wife said to her pastor-husband: "Please give me an answer without quoting Scripture." Some of the most serious damage to Christian education has been done by teachers who felt that they had to drag in Bible passages through the front door and the back door, the side window, and through some cracks in the floor for every situation they encountered.

On the other hand, when church school teachers make a fetish of avoiding expressions of Christian faith, they fail to teach the Word, and in so doing they fail to be Christian teachers. Calvin Seerveld, a professor of philosophy at Trinity Christian College, has suggested that a good Christian teacher can take any subject and, together with his students, examine its meaning within the framework of a dynamic religious faith in which the free gifts of the Holy Spirit cause both teacher and student to grow in the wisdom of the Lord.

How to Be a Good Teacher by Being a Poor Teacher

Christian schools and teachers of the past have been applauded for good discipline, for getting children to memorize a lot of things, and for producing teachers who can give split-second answers to every question. These may be nice things to be able to say about a school and teacher, but sometimes we've gone farther than that and said, "If you're a Christian teacher, you have to be a strict disciplinarian. To be a Christian teacher, you have to pontificate on every subject."

But is this true? These are, after all, pedagogical “methods,” and methods are always tricky. Ernest Hilgard, a professor at Stanford University, tells the story of a poor math teacher. He was a poor teacher because he often got mixed up when he was explaining a problem on the board. His students had to come to his rescue and tell him where he had made his mistake. But the students learned so much in helping their teacher find his mistakes that they turned out to be good mathematicians! So this poor teacher was in fact a good teacher because he caused a lot of learning. This shows how complex the business of teaching is.

One thing I hope we shall never do is identify Christian teaching with a particular *method* of teaching—like the didactic, deductive, or the pontificating kind of teaching. John Ginther of the University of Chicago calls this “errorless teaching.” This type has been identified with our Christian schools more often than the dialectic, the inductive, the inquiry, the problem-solving, the discussion, and the pupil-activity methods of teaching.

The reason it’s so important not to commit ourselves to a given procedure is that different methods do different things, and we need them all. One study showed that “errorless teaching” imparted more facts but usually more irrelevant facts, while more open teaching did not cover as much ground but the resultant learning was more relevant, significant, and functional.

Improving Our Teaching

When one starts talking about the development of capable teachers in the church, particularly for the teaching of religion in the local parish, incapable teachers are pretty hard to find. One teacher was asked: “What do you find difficult in teaching?” He said, “I have no difficulty in teaching, but my students have great difficulty in learning.” Others said, “It’s the

materials that are too difficult." At an education workshop the leader asked the teachers to write down ways to improve teaching. There were all kinds of ideas but not one person said, "Do something to improve the teachers."

Nevertheless, one group of people does not believe that every teacher is an able teacher—students. The campus natives who are restless today aren't only the ones worrying about Vietnam, race, and sex. Some of these rebellious students are worrying about the quality of teaching—the ability and spirit of the teacher. When a student turned in a test paper on which he had written, "The swine return the pearls," he was expressing resentment against teachers who come to students as little gods and patronizingly spend a little time with them but no more than they have to, teachers who condescend to impart to them 50 minutes' worth of gems from their great treasurehouse of wisdom.

Also in the church, students want teachers who will work together with them in the learning process. They want teachers who will make them think. They want teachers who will probe, discuss, analyze, stimulate, *listen*. Who are the exciting teachers? Who are the ones whose classes pupils gladly attend? For the most part they are the teachers who through some process of interaction, some process of learner involvement, some process of thought stimulation get those cogs up there going. They open windows and let fresh air in; they raise the blinds of human minds and get light streaming in. And it's a wonderful experience!

One thing that is bad for pupils is when teachers become brain drainers instead of brain exchangers. I'm referring to teachers whose only teaching method is pouring out knowledge from their own brains and draining it into the brain of the student. One of the problems with this kind of teaching is that it gets into trouble whenever the teacher's supply of information runs dry—or when he gets over into the area of

opinion and students start challenging his judgments. What does the teacher do then if he has been following the pontificating teaching approach? Well, the danger is that he'll take the steps some politicians take when they are similarly trapped:

1. He'll get angry.
2. He'll identify his position with either God or patriotism.
3. If that doesn't work, he'll become sad and look mistreated (perhaps shed a tear or two or complain).
4. If none of the above squelch the challenger, the cornered teacher may call the thinking, questioning person—child, youth, or adult—a disagreeable name or may even resort to threats of punishment.

Much better than brain drainers are brain exchangers. Edgar Dale says: "Teaching is a sharing process, a two-direction process, not a one-way affair. It is intercommunication. It includes the collision, the creative interaction of minds." If you agree with this kind of definition, then you will also agree that Christian teachers ought to be about five lengths in front of the pack even before the race begins. If Christ-love prompts anything at all in the fellowship of the body of Christ, it is this process of humble relatedness, or interaction and mutuality, or reciprocal communication—also in the study of God's Word.

Quo Vadis, Teacher?

In this age when, as Ralph McGill has said, "the Christian church is being dragged kicking and screaming into the last half of the 20th century," it is necessary to ask Christian teachers not only what you believe but also what directions you are moving in. What are your continuing values and purposes, and how would you like to improve in your teaching? In other words, "*quo vadis*, teacher?"

In answering this question each teacher must have his own "moment of truth." Each must say to himself, "What am

I doing? Where am I going, friend?" This isn't easy. It's harder to be honest about ourselves than about other people. The comic strip "BC" once showed one character saying to another, "I've made a New Year's resolution. I'm going to tell the truth. No matter what." The second character said, "Even if you get your block knocked off?" The first character said, "Yes, even then." After the second character left, the last frame of the strip showed the first character standing alone. He was talking to himself and saying, "I lied to him."

Though it is hard to be honest with ourselves, we must try. And it's especially important that Christian teachers try. There is so much at stake. The better they understand themselves, their abilities, their faith (also their lack of it), their capabilities through Christ, the better they will be able to serve the students they teach. And able teachers of the Word of God don't have to play God and pretend they know all the answers. They can let God speak through His Word directly *to* the students and *through* the students.

The best Christian teachers are also unceasingly alert for new knowledge and new developments in materials and methods of communication. The wine of the Christian Gospel doesn't change, but Jesus recommended putting it into new bottles for preserving and distributing it.

Finally, the Christian teacher can afford to accept himself and what he does with a happy, hopeful confidence. Like Noah in the play *Green Pastures*, he can say, "I ain't very much but I'm all I've got." And in giving himself to the Lord in service any Christian can count on God to accept and bless him and his ministry of the Word, as did an obscure Old Testament character by the name of Jabez. All the Sacred Scriptures tell us about Jabez is that he called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh that Thou wouldst bless me and enlarge my border, and that Thy hand might be with me . . . !" (1 Chron. 4:10). Not a bad prayer for a church school teacher, wouldn't you say?

1 The Lesson That's Not in the Book

Frederick Nohl

A church school teacher can't afford to be shortsighted about teaching. Teaching always involves more than simply telling a Bible story or working through a lesson leaflet.

Teachers are constantly teaching in their relationships to their pupils. In fact, some of their best (or worst) teaching takes place when they are least aware of it. The way a teacher handles the perpetual latecomer, the comfort he gives the young man whose favorite grandfather died, the phone call he makes to find out how sick Angela really is, the way he counsels behavior problems—these are just a few of the many ways in which the Spirit nurtures His children. And spiritual nurture is what we mean by Christian teaching.

So then, pupils not only learn lessons that are in a book, but they also learn lessons taught by us as persons. To help illustrate this point, let's consider just three ways in which we are always teaching lessons that aren't in the book: through the methods we use, the attitudes we reveal, and the behavior we demonstrate.

Our Methods

Every teacher has a method of teaching. A good teacher, in fact, is ready and able to use a variety of methods suggested by the lesson content or the needs of a class. Some methods—the lecture, for example—are most suitable for

getting across a large body of new information. Others, like the social project method, are preferable for helping pupils translate knowledge into action.

The methods we use help determine how effectively our pupils master the content of our teaching. But wholly apart from content, the methods themselves teach. To put this another way, we teach something by the way we teach.

For example, every Sunday Mrs. Avery follows much the same procedure in her class. She talks and the pupils listen. Then she asks questions that are in the pupil's book, and the pupils answer. After that the class checks some workbook exercises and everyone recites the memory verse.

Contrast Mrs. Avery's approach with that of Miss Lenning. Miss Lenning talks, but so do her pupils. They discuss matters freely, both with her and with one another. At times they run into questions that none of them can answer—at least not right away. So they read and ask and think until they find the answer. And they are not disturbed if they find only part of the answer, for they know that Christianity is a relationship to God through Christ rather than a set of answers to questions.

Moreover, Miss Lenning's class seeks not only to know but also to do. Like the time they translated Jesus' concern for the helpless into a gift-laden, song-filled visit to a nearby home for the aged. Most certainly Christianity involves knowing, but it involves much more. Christianity, as Miss Lenning has sensed, is a way of life, an adventure, an exploration. And no set of canned questions and answers is big enough to contain something so vital.

The formal content of both types of classes may be the same. But the spirit and the method are not. Mrs. Avery tends to reduce her class to the dead level of facts, while Miss Lenning works to raise hers to the level of life. And in the process both are teaching far more than the lessons in the book. The method communicates what is considered important—it teaches value.

Closely related to methods and involved in methods is the matter of attitudes. Our attitude toward teaching is a good case in point. Children will quickly sense whether we are teaching just because we feel we must, or whether it's because we have willingly responded to God's call. And having sensed our attitude, children will usually respond (and learn) accordingly: grudgingly in the first instance and more happily in the second.

Now let's assume that we really want to help teach young saints to grow up in every way into Christ. There then remains the question of our attitude toward our particular class and toward the individuals in the class (and some of them are probably just that!). This attitude and the behavior that it prompts teach many an unplanned lesson.

For example, the lesson that Christians are concerned about one another. In spite of crowded cities and an ever-shrinking world, many people live lonely lives. Children are no exception. They want to be wanted and need to feel needed and love to be loved. And unless someone actually does want and respect and love them, how can they ever do the same to others? Or how can they ever begin to sense that this is how God feels toward them? The child who experiences no pity from a cruel father cannot understand Holy Scripture when it says: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

Here, of course, is where you can help. As you show concern for each child given into your care, you can teach never-to-be-forgotten lessons of love. I'll always remember the Monday my 5-year-old got this little postcard note from her department leader:

I am sorry to hear that you have a cold. Hope it is getting better! Since your teacher also was sick today, I only have

the *Story Time* paper to send you, but perhaps your sister will share her Bible leaflet with you (you know, the one with the story for the day in it). I do have an extra activity paper for today, and I'm sending you that. Guess what? After we had the baptismal scene in Sunday school today, we went into church and saw a real baby (a girl) get baptized. She cried a little, maybe because she was cold. Take care of yourself, and we will see you next week.

Connie didn't say much after I read the note to her, but her eyes and her slightly embarrassed smile told me she knew that her teacher cared. Because her teacher cared, she had taught a lesson that wasn't in the book.

Our Behavior

Accompanying our attitudes and methods is the example of our behavior. What we do always speaks so much more loudly than what we say. The action picture the child sees of us is worth far more than the thousand words he hears from us.

If we want pupils to be at Sunday school on time, we ourselves had better be there to greet them. If we are troubled by their lack of participation in the opening devotions, we may want to examine our own worship. If their haphazard lesson preparation bothers us, we had better not let them see us desperately scanning the lesson just before class.

"When I was a boy," writes a man now grown old, "we had a Sunday school teacher whom we all called Miss Katie. I was in Miss Katie's class for several years, yet I do not remember one lesson she taught, not one golden text or central truth. But I remember Miss Katie, her Christian character, kindly manner, and living. Her life was the light of her class. We learned a lot and were helped a lot by just being with this saintly woman."

In short, our behavior—our life—provides a curriculum all of its own, one that penetrates deeply into the lives of those

we teach. In the final analysis, the truly important lessons are the influences of one person upon another human being's inner total self.

Nothing of what I've said makes church school books superfluous. We and our pupils still need them to help us dig deeply into the Scriptures. But to repeat: The lessons we are to teach are not all in our books. They are also in us and, more particularly, in our methods, our attitudes, and our lives.

1 The Teacher — A Spiritual Counselor

Frederick Nohl

Actually, this should not be too surprising, for a church school teacher *is* many things; he *is* all kinds of people wrapped under one skin. At one time or another—and sometimes at one and the same time—a teacher may be a storyteller, a substitute parent, an instructor in the art of shoelacing, a detective on the trail of the scissors that were here just a minute ago, a distributor of hot dogs at the annual church picnic.

Not the least of the roles you have been called to play is that of spiritual counselor. At first this being a spiritual counselor may sound forbidding, conjuring up visions of book-lined and couch-furnished rooms where men and women in clerical collars or white uniforms are busily listening to people pour out their problems. Obviously, this is not what I have in mind. Rather by the term “spiritual counselor” I mean a person who is, first of all, growing up spiritually himself and who, secondly, because of this growth, is increasingly equipped to nurture others in the faith.

If spiritual counseling is basically our helping others to grow spiritually, we need to be clear on the question: What are the means by which spiritual growth takes place?

First there is the Bible, more particularly the Gospel. In and through the pages of Scripture God comes to us, revealing to us His love and His will. The Scriptures, moreover, testify and witness to Jesus Christ, the living Word, the Redeemer. And as we come to know Jesus Christ, we come to know God Himself. For Jesus Christ is the perfect revelation of God, as He Himself said when He reminded the disciples that "he who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

God also comes to us in the mystery of the sacraments. In Holy Baptism God reaches out to us, takes hold of us, through faith in His Son tears us away from sin, Satan, and self, and makes us new members of Christ's body, the church. And within this church God continues to come to us in the Lord's Supper. Here God assures us that we are loved and forgiven, at the same time empowering us to be ever more fully what we want to be, namely, true children of the Father.

And God speaks the Word through people as well as through the printed page. The child, or for that matter the adult, comes to know God and to grow in his ability to respond to God as he sees God at work in the lives of Christians. As one Christian experiences the love, the forgiveness, the concern, or the encouragement of another—whether it be in the home, the classroom, the office, or the playground—he grows in his appreciation of the fact that God is love and forgiveness and concern and encouragement.

Thus the Christian should always be edifying, teaching, and revealing God to others, whether he is speaking, doing, or thinking. He is always "a letter from Christ . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3). And not only is this living letter something the Spirit writes; it is also something He uses to reach out to others.

What special factors help the “living letter” of the Sunday school teacher serve effectively as a spiritual counselor? Here are three:

The first involves the *teacher's self-image*. “Who am I?” is a question that every teacher needs to ask himself frequently. And the answer, at least for our purposes, is simply this: The teacher is a God-appointed channel of the Holy Spirit, a means by which God makes Himself known to others. As such the teacher is a gift of God to the church, whose function it is to equip and build up its members.

A second factor that makes a more effective spiritual counselor is *an adequate relationship between teacher and learner*. A teacher has little chance of influencing anyone with whom he has not established a friendly relationship and in whom he cannot awaken a sense of trust.

Unfortunately there are no magic formulas to insure that a class will respond positively to its teacher. Nevertheless there are certain teacher characteristics that facilitate such responses.

One of these is sincerity. Like so many abstractions, the real nature of sincerity is difficult to put into words. But most certainly the sincere person is one who has the courage to be what he is, with all his faults and shortcomings. Most people, children included, are quick to detect insincerity and the attempt to act differently than one really is. And once detected, this sham remains a barrier between the persons involved, a barrier that throws needless hurdles into the path of the Holy Spirit.

Another teacher characteristic that facilitates proper relationships is the ability to love. A Christian teacher loves because God loved (1 John 4:19). In its pure form this love is not selfish, sentimental, and superficial. It is rather a deep “inner force which responds to the outstretched hand of God. For love which is genuine reflects the character of God

Himself—warm, friendly, understanding, ready to sacrifice for another.” Again, Christian love “is a force causing men to seek the welfare of others, even at the sacrifice of his [sic] own life, if need be, even as Jesus sacrificed His life on the cross.” (Phyllis Newcomb Maramarco, *The Kindergarten of the Church*, p. 10)

The third and most important characteristic of the effective spiritual counselor is *the ability to distinguish between the Law and the Gospel*. This is no easy task. Martin Luther recognized the difficulty all too well when he suggested that we “place the man who is able nicely to divorce the Law from the Gospel at the head of the list and call him a Doctor of Holy Scriptures, for without the Holy Spirit the attainment of this differentiating is impossible.”

In spite of the difficulty the Christian teacher cannot afford to escape the necessity. The natural tendency of man, including the Christian man, is to reject the freedom which the Gospel gives him and to put himself under the slavery which is the Law, from which Christ has freed him. For example, how often aren't pupils encouraged to be honest because honesty is the best policy. This is legalism pure and simple. It is selfish to be honest because it pays. The Christian rather endeavors to be honest because as a new creature in Christ he wants to be honest.

Again, the Christian teen-ager does not drive safely because the life he saves may be his own. Rather in Christ he chooses to drive safely because this is what he wants to do, because this is one way he can reflect to others the unmerited love and grace of God which has come to him.

The teacher-counselor who understands the relations of Law and Gospel avoids motivating his pupils with comments such as “See how much Jesus loves you. Now you must love Him too.” He realizes that a Christian does not love because he must; he does not even love solely because he is grateful

for having been loved. He loves because the Christ who redeemed him and dwells with him compels him to; because as God's child it is in his nature to love.

A Sunday school teacher is surrounded with opportunities to be a spiritual counselor. All he needs is eyes to see and ears to hear.

The opportunity may come in a class discussion of the question, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" The counsel of a wise teacher can help pupils recognize that their first calling will always be that of a Christian. At the same time God may call them into any one of 10,000 or more occupations. But whatever their occupation, be it farmer, dentist, porter, or preacher, it can be lived out to the glory of God and the welfare of mankind.

Again, the opportunity for spiritual counsel may come to the teacher as he meets Larry heading straight for home after Sunday school, obviously skipping the following worship service. What he says to Larry at this point may be very important. He can scare Larry by threatening him with punishment and by backing up his threats with God's threats, both real and imagined. Or else the teacher can share with Larry his own reasons for worshiping: a desire to glorify and praise God for His love and forgiveness in Christ, an opportunity to grow in faith and Christian life, a way of witnessing and setting an example, etc.

But perhaps Larry's real problem lies at home. This suggests another opportunity for spiritual counsel, namely, contacts with the pupils' families. The Sunday school needs the home, and the home needs the Sunday school. Each needs to know what the other is contributing to the Christian education of its members, and together they need to explore means of training a generation that sets its hope in God. Not the least of the avenues available for promoting such exploration is an annual visit by the teacher, preferably before he meets his new class for the first time.

Sunday school teaching makes enough demands as it is. Why should I have to worry about the *whole* life of my pupils? Well, in the first place, because God has bothered to single us out to be spiritual counselors and has presented us as gifts to the church with the power to guide and teach His people.

In the second place we bother to be spiritual counselors because the need exists for helping other Christians "to grow up in every way into Christ" (Eph. 4:15). The fulfilling of this need is precisely our job of teaching.

And in the third place we bother because we do not stand alone in our calling. Undergirding and empowering our every move are God's promises of help, promises that lead us to say with Paul that we can do all things in Him who strengthens us. (Phil. 4:13)

Why bother? One may as well ask, "Why teach?" Christian teachers *are* spiritual counselors.

Teaching as Process

When asked what subject areas he taught, a teacher replied, "I do not teach subjects; I teach people."

This was a good answer. As Christian teachers our concern is not merely, or even primarily, to transmit a body of knowledge. Rather it is to be the instrument of the Holy Spirit to lead people into a more meaningful and purposeful relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In the lead article of this section Earl H. Gaulke suggests that a good teacher in the teaching-learning process must first have the sense of adequacy and confidence that comes from faith in the living God. Then he is to apply the truths of God to the real lives of his individual students.

Warren H. Schmidt indicates that if the teacher is concerned only about words, the student may not really be learning. The teacher must get to the will and heart of the learner if he is to communicate successfully. To achieve this, the teacher must involve his students in the decision-making processes through democratic methods. Donald Hoeferkamp picks up Dr. Schmidt's concern for a democratic learning situation by offering practical help for achieving a democratic climate of learning in the classroom.

The teacher who is long on discipline may have an orderly class which silently listens to him, but he may not be persuading anyone. Students must have freedom to respond, to challenge, to disagree if they are to work out for themselves their doubts and misunderstandings. As David L. Luecke

emphasizes, an effective teaching-learning situation demands an atmosphere that protects the freedom and integrity of the individual.

The chief task of the teacher, of course, is to lead students really to understand and trust God's love in Jesus Christ. If the words of God's love are to bear fruit, these words must be spoken in a context of love. But "love" is one of those ambiguous concepts which means different things to different people. In *The Behavior of Love* James J. Johnson helps us see the true character of God's love as it is to be expressed in the lives of His people.

What's a Good Teacher? 2

Earl H. Gaulke

What's a "good" teacher? Think back a minute to the teachers you yourself had in grade school. Picture to yourself the sights and sounds of the classes in which you were a pupil. What teachers do you remember best?

Now let's go one step further. What was it about that favorite teacher which makes you treasure your memory of him even after many years? Doesn't it all boil down to this: We all treasure the teacher who treated us as a *person*, who communicated to us the feeling: "That teacher really cares about *me*"?

This conclusion is substantiated by a study made by Dr. Paul Witty in 1947. From letters written by 12,000 school children, he tabulated a list of teacher traits that were most valued by them. The top two traits mentioned were (1) a cooperative, democratic attitude and (2) kindness and consideration for the individual—patience. *Unusual proficiency in teaching a particular subject was mentioned only at the very bottom of the list!*

Now all this, of course, doesn't mean that as church school teachers we ought not be concerned about our skill in teaching our subject matter. But it does suggest that *real* teaching in the church school is something more than the skillful communicating of Biblical information. Rather, it is the building up of a relationship of love, respect, trust, and forgiveness between pupil and teacher and pupil and pupil. Good teaching in the church school involves the winning of our pupils as

friends, so that together with them we might share and grow in our experience of the love of God in Christ.

“Good” Teachers Feel Adequate

How can we get to be that kind of a “good” church school teacher? If we could examine the personalities of the teachers we ourselves cherished, we would probably discover that these teachers were adequate, growing persons themselves. Because they were secure in themselves, not crippled by anxieties and fears, they had the resources to reach out and touch us as persons too.

A sense of adequacy in ourselves—how do we get it? God’s Word suggests that we keep in mind what God has made us to be in Christ. This will help us feel adequate—and, by the power of God’s Spirit, *be* adequate—as persons. Thereby we shall be able to cope with our anxieties, casting “all your anxieties on Him [God], for He cares about you.” We shall not be overpowered by crippling feelings of guilt, for we shall realize that “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” We shall find in God’s love the resources we need both to love God (“we love Him because He first loved us”) and to love our pupils with His own kind of outgoing love, even though imperfectly. (“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”)

Person-to-Person Teaching

As we teachers thus view ourselves as adequate Christian persons in Christ, we will have the resources to lead our children to grow as adequate Christian persons. When our problem child, Johnny, shouts, “I don’t like this dumb old Sunday school,” we won’t feel, “Oh, he doesn’t like me. I better humor him.” Nor will we feel, “What a terrible thing to say about the house of God! What would people think if they heard him? I’ll have to lecture him for that!” But rather,

feeling unthreatened ourselves, we will be free to concentrate on what caused *him* to say what he did, and how we may help *him* to feel himself a part of the class fellowship. What we do in this situation will be based on concern for Johnny as a *person* rather than as an object to be manipulated or appeased to satisfy us.

Or take another example. During a discussion Billy says, "If anybody ever hits me, I'm gonna hit him back." Our attitude to this remark could be: "I can't let any remark like that get by in *my* class," and attempt to "beat it down" with a barrage of Bible passages. Or, again, filled with panic, we might try to sidestep the issue by saying, "Billy, you don't really mean that."

But if we are concerned about touching the real Billy in his inner thought life, we will neither "jump on" nor "pooh-pooh" his sincerely offered opinion. Rather, we will mentally review what we know about Billy and, as a friend, prayerfully try to lead him to the Christian attitude: "I guess we all feel angry when somebody is mean to us, Billy. But let's think a little more about what we can do when somebody is mean. Bill, would you tell us about a time when somebody was mean to you?"

When we thus realize that *good* teaching is teaching which is concerned with people, no less than with subject matter, we will seek to *know* our pupils as well as our subject matter.

To accomplish this, we will want to know our pupils by name as early as possible in the church school year and have the pupils get to know one another by name. One way to do this is to let each pupil wear a name card for the first few sessions, so that we can consistently greet and address them by name. We can assign each a definite chair in our class circle, both to assist us in associating name with place and to give each child a sense of belonging ("This is *my* place in the group").

Many teachers keep a notebook in which they jot down memos on each child: his interests, hobbies, favorite TV shows; his status in regard to others in the class; significant things which he said and did in the class period; his family background, etc. Such a notebook is as valuable in helping the teacher prepare to teach *his* particular pupils as the teachers quarterly is valuable for help in teaching the subject matter. (Some of the material for such a notebook can be gathered through a questionnaire sent to parents or filled out by the class.)

Friendly, personal conversations in the pre-session; personal notes to the pupil who is sick or absent; planned class fellowship through a party or tour, calling on the home—all these are ways in which the dedicated teacher may seek to express concern for his pupils as persons growing in the Christian life. We could continue to enumerate ways. But the point is: if we truly want to be the kind of teacher who reaches hearts and spirits as well as minds, we will find—or are already finding—ways to reach them as persons.

To be sure, it isn't easy to be that kind of a "good" teacher. It takes time, earnest prayer, and thoughtful planning with the needs of the pupils as well as the subject matter in mind. It means to give ourselves to the teaching task.

And to do that we need to remember Him who gave Himself for us and to give ourselves to Him. Only when we are sure that nothing can separate us from His love can we be truly free from the need to protect our egos. To the degree that this freedom pervades the teaching situation will the Holy Spirit be given room to foster the life of God in our pupils.

How Communication Can Be Improved 2

Warren H. Schmidt

In one sense the major task of the church can be described as a massive communication task. It has a message to present—a set of truths, a suggested way of viewing life as a whole.

Like that of most organizations the church's communication system is far from perfect. Often the message gets garbled—or is not heard at all. The church school leader therefore increases his effectiveness if he understands how the communication process takes place and if he is aware of common causes of communication difficulties. Toward this end he may wish to check whether he is behaving on the basis of the following assumptions:

1. Logic and facts are the most important determinants of whether an idea will be accepted.

2. Repetition of an idea is the surest way to make it understood and accepted by the listener.

3. A crucial message, like the Christian Gospel, is communicated most effectively by having a persuasive person present it while the hearers listen.

4. Evangelism requires a "selling" approach.

5. If people can be taught to say—and even memorize—Biblical statements, these statements will inevitably influence their lives.

6. Conversely, if people can be discouraged or prevented from expressing "wrong" ideas or doubts, these ideas will lose their influence on the individuals.

7. It is important to get all the members of the church to agree to use the same words in expressing key concepts.

The assumptions above all reflect a view of the communication process that has come into question in recent years. Only recently have we come to appreciate the complexity of communication—that it involves considerably more than a speaker who has an idea to convey to a listener who is willing to sit still. We now recognize, for example, that whenever two persons communicate, there are at least six messages, each somewhat different, involved in the conversation:

- what you *mean* to say
- what you *actually* say
- what the other person *hears*
- what the other person *thinks* he hears
- what the other person *says*
- what you *think* the other person hears

The study of semantics has underscored the fact that words mean very different things to different people. It now appears rather naive to assume that because all members of a confirmation class have memorized a certain passage of Scripture they will all possess the same concept described in that passage. One wonders, in view of new knowledge of the communication process, about the great importance we sometimes attach to getting agreement to certain words and phrases and of our readiness to criticize those who prefer to describe the same concept in somewhat different ways. How easily we can believe that a word is a reality and that if one has grasped the word he has grasped the truth!

The church leader might also bear in mind that a listener usually responds to much more than the words which are said. What he hears is strongly influenced by his attitude toward the speaker, his expectations, his past experience, his needs, etc. I once counseled a Lutheran college student who cringed whenever his pastor talked of God as “our

Father.” This lad had a very punishing father, and so the father image of God evoked fear rather than love and assurance. His pastor never knew this, however, because the boy never felt free to express his “negative” reactions to a clergyman.

There is now a massive amount of literature and research on communication. Among the many stimulating ideas now available are these:

1. To insure more accurate transmission of ideas, communication must be a two-way process.

2. We always communicate at two levels: (1) the topic or task level and (2) the emotional, or feeling, level.

3. People are more likely to hear and accept ideas which fit their present beliefs and expectations and to resist those that are different.

4. The most effective communication takes place in a “permissive” atmosphere, that is, one in which the individual feels free to express himself without fear of criticism.

5. Negative feelings and doubts, if unexpressed, continue to influence the individual who has them.

6. Much communication is nonverbal. It is possible to say the words “God loves you” in such a way that the hearer gets the impression that God really despises him.

In general, studies of communication have made us more aware of the *listener's* role in the communication process. The listener is rarely passive, even though his posture may give that appearance. He is constantly filtering out ideas, adding nuances of his own to the message, interpreting, evaluating. The message which ultimately “arrives” in his consciousness may therefore be quite different from the idea which started out in the mind of the sender.

The relationship between sender and receiver is also a crucial factor. Here is where the Christian notion of “witnessing” seems to me to be of tremendous value. A witness

is one who *reports* what he has experienced; he does not “sell.” He is therefore less of a threat to the person who holds a different belief. The person listening to a witness has little need to become defensive of his own views, because the witness does not tell him, “You are wrong, and I am right.” Rather a witness says, “This is what *I* believe and how it has worked out in *my* life. These beliefs may be of use to you too.” He is careful to leave the decision clearly in the hands of the listener, with no coercion or pressure. Under these conditions communication is more likely to be clear and useful and usually more persuasive as well.

Something might be said here about the right to be “different” within the church family. Sometimes church leaders have implied that all doubting is sinful, and therefore they have made it difficult for individuals to express their doubts without feeling guilty. It might be noted that most intelligent, thoughtful persons have doubts about themselves, other people, the purpose of life, and other complex issues. To drive these doubts underground can lead to unnecessary guilt, anxiety, and resentment. Most church organizations have much to learn about creating the kind of free and open “climate” in which an individual can feel safe in expressing his feelings and doubts honestly.

When Leadership Is Shared 2

Warren H. Schmidt

Years ago we used to think of leadership as a quality possessed by certain individuals. We talked of “leaders being born, not made.” There is a growing tendency to reexamine this way of thinking about leadership. More and more we are gathering evidence that in an effective group (and this applies also to Sunday school staffs) leadership is the business of every person in the group—not just the responsibility of one person who sits up front.

Studies have shown that leadership can be defined in terms of *functions to be performed in a group*. Social scientists who have analyzed hundreds of groups have defined these functions in terms of roles that individual members of a group can play. There are, for example, a number of roles which must be performed in a group in accomplishing its *task*. These *task* roles include such functions as initiating activity, seeking information, seeking opinion, giving information, giving opinion, elaborating ideas, coordinating, summarizing, and testing the feasibility of proposals.

Another set of functions must be performed by somebody in the group if the group is to maintain high morale. These *group-building* roles include such things as encouraging, supporting, setting standards, expressing group feeling, compromising, and helping to see that participation is not monopolized.

Each of these functions can be viewed as a part of the

leadership job. In groups where the members think of leadership in these terms, they discover that it is not only possible but exceedingly profitable to *share* the responsibilities of leadership. The strength and creativity of such a group is not dependent on who happens to occupy the chairman's seat, but rather rests on the *total resources* in the group.

A Sense of Responsibility Depends Largely on Involvement in the Decision-Making Process

One of the most common complaints of appointed leaders is that members do not fulfill commitments. Committees fall down on the job. People forget to do the tasks they have volunteered to undertake or fail to carry out assignments they have accepted. It is now quite clear that we act more responsibly when we have had a full share in developing the plans we are to implement.

Freedom and responsibility seem to go hand in hand. Just as every freedom has its corresponding responsibilities, so every responsibility must have its corresponding freedoms. Freedom is dependent on the number of choices available to us. As these choices are cut down, we tend to feel less responsible for the quality and results of the decision itself.

This sheds some light on a very common practice among many organizations. Many groups still seem to feel that the way to build a strong organization is to "give everybody a job." They assume that the assignment of some activity will increase loyalty to the organization. While this is partially true, it is far from a certainty. Some individuals may resent being given assignments—though these assignments are given with the best intentions. If people are to feel a real part of the organization, they must be involved at the *planning* and *decision-making* level, not just at the action level.

A related matter is the problem of getting volunteers to serve on a committee. One of the reasons for the ineffective-

ness of some committees can be traced to the *process* by which it was appointed. Sometimes an organization sets up a committee before carefully setting up its job description. Even more frequently people are selected to serve on a committee without the parent body thinking clearly about the kinds of skills and points of view required to do the committee's task. The result may be a group of people labeled "committee" who have an ill-defined task, who don't understand exactly why they were chosen, and who may actually lack the resources necessary to do their job. Serving on such a committee can be time consuming and frustrating (as most of us know from experience).

Effective Democratic Meetings Must Be Carefully Planned

One of the interesting misconceptions that has grown up in recent years is the assumption that really "democratic" meetings must be put together rather casually. This misconception perhaps represents a reaction against authoritarian meetings planned in such a way that the participants are kept firmly under the control of the designated leadership.

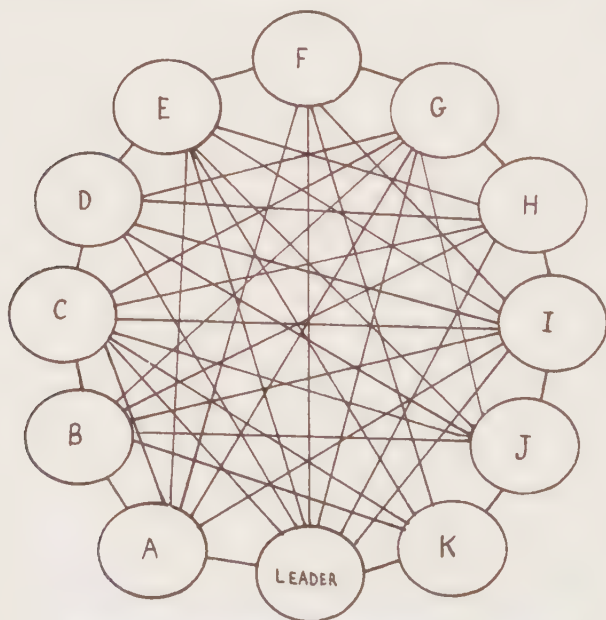
This may be an instance of "throwing out the baby with the bath water." In trying to prevent highly controlled meetings we have sometimes said, "Let's not do any planning until we get there." This has caused some meetings to be unusually slow in getting off the ground and generally sloppy in program and procedure. More and more we are discovering that it is just as important to develop careful plans and a well-defined structure for a really democratic meeting as for a highly controlled meeting.

It may be worthwhile to spell out some of the differences between planning an authoritarian meeting and planning a democratic meeting. In the *authoritarian* meeting the planner concerns himself with questions like these: How can I get

this group to accept my ideas and plans? What kinds of resistance can I expect, and how can I keep them from emerging in the group?

By contrast, the planner of a democratic meeting is likely to ask questions like these: What are the needs and problems which this group faces? How can they decide where to focus their major attention? What kind of information do they need to deal with these issues intelligently? What kind of procedures will help make full use of the resources in the group?

The essential planning job to be done is to think through in advance of the meeting the problems which are *procedural* and to resolve these so that the time of the group is used on the more important content and decision matters.



In ideal group discussion all members interact with one another as well as with the leader.

Group Interaction Is Important in Teaching

When leadership is shared in a school group, the probability of learning increases because of increased interest and greater readiness to accept that which is to be learned. "I can't force my children to believe; I can only tell them *what* to believe," a Bible teacher said rightly in a recent conference. But the teacher was only *half* right.

It is true that we cannot force faith, but it is not true that we can only *tell* our pupils what to believe. We can also search the Scriptures together; we can discuss "man to man" a question in an honest, open manner; we can respect the abilities of our pupils and draw on these; we can allow the pupils to be teachers, since teachers always learn more than their pupils.

A great deal has been discovered in recent years about the values of a so-called democratic group process. Sunday school leaders and teachers who will use the insights and skills that improve group operations will find that these also improve their staff spirit and the attitudes, behavior, and real learning of their classes.

How Democratic Are You? 2

Donald Hoeferkamp

Applying the principles of democracy to a teaching situation, we think of the growth of the pupil as our main goal. Whatever contributes to the individual's welfare is to receive the highest priority. The pupil, not the teacher, is the center of attention. It is for the pupil's sake that we have a church

school at all. The subject-centered and teacher-dominated class is likely to become a regimented, uninterested, rebellious, or at least passive group. And regimentation discourages real learning.

If the pupil's welfare and growth are a major concern, we may have to revise some of our cherished ways of doing things. To be honest with ourselves, we must admit that traces of the authoritarian manner show up in our teaching. We prefer to give orders and do the talking. We want the class session to work out just as we had planned it, with the students giving all the answers to what we had in mind.

The regimented, authoritarian approach may be necessary in the armed services, where strict compliance with orders is required. But to pattern our classes after the military is to have a distorted view of the way people's minds develop and the way their spirits are nurtured.

If the picture sounds overdrawn, perhaps the quiz below will reveal the need for reevaluating our attitudes and methods. Answer the questions as truthfully as possible for yourself *before* reading the comment on each one, and then consider how you rate.

A Check on Attitudes and Methods

	Yes	No
1. Does most of the talking in my class flow from me to the pupils and from the pupils to me?____	☐	☐
2. Do I put down the pupil who questions my word or contradicts me? _____	☐	☐
3. Can I detect changes taking place in the attitudes and actions of my class? _____	☐	☐
4. Are my pupils seated in rows facing me? _____	☐	☐
5. Do I feel that my job is done when the pupils have all the facts? _____	☐	☐

6. Do I often fear that class members may have differing points of view on a question and that I won't know how to reconcile them? _____ ☐ ☐
7. Is my class attendance usually larger than 12? _____ ☐ ☐
8. Do I try to get my pupils to express their true feelings? _____ ☐ ☐
9. Do I need to teach in order to feel important? _ ☐ ☐
10. Do I usually take it upon myself to answer any problem that arises in class? _____ ☐ ☐

1. For the democratic teacher the answer is *no*. If all or most of the talking flows from the teacher to the pupil and vice versa, the pupils have little opportunity for exchanging viewpoints with one another. When class members enter into a discussion among themselves, these channels of communication enable pupils to advance together toward maturity. Interaction within a class is highly desirable from a democratic point of view.

2. Again, a *no* indicates that democracy is in practice. When teachers rule with an iron hand, they betray an underlying feeling of inadequacy. They are more concerned with their own standing with themselves than with the pupil who doubts or questions their word. So they hide behind their authority, rejecting criticism and the possibility that they can err or fail to know all the answers.

The democratic leader is less likely to incur hostility and contradiction than the authoritarian leader. The democratic leader respects the dignity of each person, child or adult, as a thinking child of God. If there are honest doubts, he permits them to be brought into the open for discussion. In no case does he reject the person who dares to contradict him. He needn't, because he isn't afraid to face truth, or to allow truth to face a challenge.

3. The preferred answer is *yes*. Growth is impossible without change. At times the change is imperceptible, but over a longer period it should become apparent. Changes in attitude and action result as the pupils become personally involved in what is being taught. The impact of Christ on their lives takes place more readily when they have an active part in the class session and feel it is their own. Democracy makes for higher morale in the church school and greater improvement in the lives of the pupils.

4. *No*, we hope. The arrangement of chairs in straight rows facing the teacher is too formal and hinders the feeling of pupil-to-pupil relatedness. For classes that meet in school rooms, the solution may be to arrange the desks in a circle, a rectangle, or a T. This enables each pupil to face every other one and brings all into the total group activity.

5. An emphatic *no* is desired. Teaching only for the purpose of imparting information is inconsistent with the goals of the church and its schools. We must teach more than *lessons*; we are to teach *persons*. Democratic teaching focuses on pupils' developmental needs and seeks to minister to them.

6. If you checked *no*, congratulations! Differing viewpoints don't always demand reconciliation. "But a statement has to be either *right* or *wrong*!" we usually think. Of course, Biblical truths are indisputable in themselves. But their application to existing circumstances may well be within the realm of discussion. Conflicting opinions are not to be feared but welcomed, because they can stimulate thinking and discussion in a way that passive agreement cannot. In addition, facing up to differences democratically trains the class members to be respectful and tolerant of others.

7. The answer should be *no*. Too many pupils in a class reduces the extent to which each one can participate. The group should be large enough to draw upon a wide range of ideas and experience, but it should not be so large that the

individual feels lost or dwarfed. A group of six to eight is considered the ideal size for face-to-face discussion. By maintaining the proper level of class size we keep the best interest of the pupil in the forefront.

8. *Yes* is recommended for this one. Drawing out the shy pupil or getting beneath the surface of the forward pupil's aggressiveness isn't always easy. But the expression of real feelings is essential to the pupils' spiritual development. Teachers who are sensitive to the underlying emotions of their class will meet with a warm response and will get closer to their pupils than the one who deals only with his subject matter instead of his "subjects."

9. Another *no* here, we hope. A driving compulsion for feeling important is another mark of the self-centered leader or teacher. It isn't wrong to derive a sense of satisfaction from teaching in the church, but the primary concern must always be the pupil's welfare even at the cost of self-sacrifice. Any servant of Christ who thinks he is not expendable is in danger of serving for personal glory.

10. The answer is *no*, when the teaching task is rightly understood. There's a better way of dealing with problems than trying to solve them all single-handedly. Try throwing the question or problem open to the class for their consideration. It then becomes the group's concern, and each member will weigh it as if it were his own problem. The democratic teacher doesn't feel the need of defending his position as leader but entrusts the problem-solving and decision-making to the whole group.

If you had less than five answers "right," it's time to re-think your way of conducting your class. Six or seven correct shows that you are a tolerable human person—a pretty nice teacher—but you still have areas for improvement. If you had eight or nine right, your class is very fortunate. Ten correct—watch out for complacency!

Admittedly, the questions in this quiz are not hard and fast dos and don'ts. But the democratic principles they illustrate are valid for measuring good teaching.

2 Teaching in Freedom

David L. Luecke

Mom and Dad are concerned for teen-age Johnny. He seems to live aimlessly. He wastes his time hanging around with a shiftless gang down at the local service station. As they wait for him to come home each night, Johnny's parents ponder how helpless they are to get through to their son, how remote Johnny has become from them.

The door finally opens and Johnny shuffles in.

"Is that you, Johnny?"

"Yea."

"Where have you been?"

"Nowhere."

"What have you been doing?"

"Nothing."

"Who were you with?"

"Nobody."

Then follows a terse "G'night." The door to Johnny's room closes, and a radio begins to play rhythmic sounds which Johnny's parents find hard to understand or appreciate. The conversation with their son is over for the night. Johnny and his parents inhabit the same house, but their relationship is remote.

Johnny's mother talks to her pastor in his office. "The boy

just won't listen," she complains. "The other night I finally went to his room, and we had a good talk together. I told him he was wasting his time just talking about girls and cars at the filling station every night. I told him he ought to do something worthwhile with his time. But John didn't even seem to be listening to me. It was like talking to a brick wall. All he would ever say was 'O. K., Mom.' It seems hopeless."

Johnny makes the situation sound different when he describes it to the pastor: "My parents are always right, and I'm always wrong. If I tell them where I've been, they jump all over me. If I tell them whom I was with, they blame them. If I tell them what we did, they moan about that. The best way to keep peace is to say what they want to hear whether or not it's exactly true, or just to say nothing at all. That saves a lot of arguments. They just don't understand. Never will."

Johnny's parents are right, of course. Johnny needs their guidance. His basic attitudes and values and life goals need major overhauling.

But in part Johnny is right too. His appraisal of the situation is accurate enough. His parents don't understand him. What his mother means by a "good talk together" is really a one-way lecture. Johnny has learned that when he responds, he must either say the right thing in the right way or he better not say anything at all. Right or wrong, down deep Johnny feels that his parents don't really *want* to understand him. He feels rejected.

It's just because his parents don't really listen—or listen only to contradict and refute rather than to understand—that Johnny doesn't express his real thoughts and feelings. At times, to bring peace, Johnny may say what he thinks his parents want to hear, but without conviction. It is *their* thinking, not his. That's one reason why there is a wide gap between what Johnny sometimes says and what he actually does.

If his parents are to have a real influence over Johnny's attitudes and values, they will have to convince him that they love him as he is, have a genuine interest in him as a person, and want to help him think through and resolve his problems himself. If this is to happen, a climate must first be established that assures Johnny that he will be loved, respected, and secure whenever he expresses himself honestly. His parents must be ready to understand, not just to criticize. They need to help Johnny to straighten out his thinking, not try to do his thinking for him.

This relationship of Johnny and his parents points to a basic problem of church school teachers who take seriously their task of influencing and changing attitudes and values of their students. Teachers are seriously handicapped by a lack of honest expression from their students. The student says what he feels is acceptable instead of expressing his own true thinking or attitude. Or he plays it safe by saying as little as possible.

So if a teacher wants to help students become genuinely involved in classroom dialog, the first thing needed is an atmosphere of openness where real thoughts and feelings can be freely expressed. An open and permissive climate for such honest exchange has at least three prerequisites:

1. The student must feel accepted as he is — with whatever limitations, incorrect beliefs, or attitudes he may hold.
2. The student must feel secure enough to express himself honestly — safe from rejection, sharp criticism, or any hint of ridicule.
3. The student must feel that the teacher and the class are helping him to do his own thinking rather than trying to do his thinking for him.

To be accepted as a person is not as simple as it sounds. Our church school students come from varying church backgrounds and sometimes from no church background at all.

Such students have a natural uncertainty about their acceptance and are likely to express themselves rather timidly at first. It may quickly become obvious that such a student does not have the Bible knowledge or other church-related information shared by the other students. A pointed rebuke or taint of ridicule directed at an honest expression by the student quickly drives him from further discussion if not from attendance at the class.

Even when they have been "raised" in the church school and church, some pupils are keenly aware that much of their real thinking, values, and attitudes are not in harmony with what is taught in the church school. The student is not likely to express these conflicting ideas and get them out in the open. He is afraid of being made to look stupid or foolish. So he hides his real thoughts and expresses only what he thinks the teacher wants to hear.

Second, the student must feel personally secure when expressing himself honestly. It's difficult for many teachers to listen patiently and sympathetically to the expression of bad attitudes, unwholesome values, or even what sounds like heresy.

This was part of the problem of Johnny's parents. But the teacher who once makes a student look stupid or feel ashamed when expressing himself honestly will soon find the same sort of relationship develop that Johnny had with his parents. The student will simply withdraw from expressing himself honestly. He learns that it is less painful if he stays uninvolved. When this happens, the teacher loses his ability to help the student on a deeply personal level. The teacher must be more eager to understand than to correct, more ready to listen than to squelch with his superior knowledge.

This brings us to a third factor in creating a climate in which honest expression is likely to come from students. The student must feel that the teacher is helping him to do his

own thinking rather than trying to do his thinking for him. This is frequently a problem in the relationship of clergy to laity within the church. The laity at times seems content to allow the clergy to do their theological thinking for them, rather than merely to guide and direct them. Perhaps this leads to the Sunday school teacher's willingness to allow the quarterly to do his thinking for him—and to the student who is willing to let the teacher do his thinking for him.

To be sure, a reliance on authority in judging theological truth may protect the church from the expression of any off-color theology. But this attitude is the essence of "dead orthodoxy." If Christian education is to help the student bring his thinking, beliefs, values, and life goals into harmony with God's purposes, then he will have to do his own thinking and believing. The teacher can do no more than guide, question, suggest, teach, motivate.

Recently I spoke with a married couple who were upset with the adult Bible class in the congregation to which they had transferred about a year ago. They complained that questions and comments made by many of the adults in their new class were shockingly out of harmony with doctrinal positions accepted by their church. The people, they were amazed to discover, seemed to question almost everything. The class was attended by a number of nonmember visitors each Sunday.

They compared this class to the adult Bible class of their previous congregation. But at my questioning they admitted that only six people had attended this class! None of these six ever really said anything during the class period but merely listened to the teacher read his lecture. Of course, these students expressed no unorthodox theology there. They expressed nothing at all. With all due credit to the faithful six and their careful teacher, one must wonder whether real spiritual growth, in terms of changed attitudes and development of skills to serve God, was really taking place.

All of us who teach face a decision. Do we want the full class including “outsiders” questioning and expressing themselves honestly and freely with all the risks that this involves? Or do we want the safe, silent, faithful six?

The Behavior of Love 2

James J. Johnson

“Love makes the world go round.” “Love is a many-splendored thing.” “Love is just around the corner.” “Love is here to stay.”

Analyze the love slogans that are shouted out in our day in popular songs and movie advertisements. It won’t take you long to find a host of inconsistencies indicating that people do not really understand what love is. This is true of every kind of love relationship, whether it be the love between sweethearts, the love between husband and wife, parents and children, the love of one friend for another.

The reason for the general confusion lies, as Erich Fromm points out in his book *The Art of Loving*, in that people are concerned more about the *object of love* than the *function of loving*. In other words, the trouble lies in our being more concerned to find an object that’s “lovable” than to gain an understanding of what it means to love. Self-consciousness about the need *to be loved* rather than the need *to love* results in a frantic search for love. But we do not find love by searching for it. We find it by giving it.

People often make a distinction between love that is “real” in a human relationship and love that is not. The question is:

How does *real* love behave? What gives real love the quality of genuineness in contrast to pseudoloves?

It's easy, of course, to talk about love, and we do it rather glibly, especially when we talk about loving "in general," that is, without having a specific love object in mind. It is easier, for example, to love the "natives" in Africa than the Negro family that lives next door to us. It is easier to love "the heathen" somewhere out on a Pacific island than that drunken sot who lives down the street.

Such loving "at a distance," however, is never tested in the crucible of human relationships. Loving "in general" often ends up being merely talk. But love is something we do. Love may be expressed in words, or it may not be; but as in the relation between faith and works, if there is no loving deed, the love itself may be questioned.

Love is acting. Love is giving. To quote him again, Erich Fromm asks: "What does one person give to another?" His answer: "He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life. This does not necessarily mean that he sacrifices his life for the other [although this may be the ultimate expression of love]—but that he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humor, of his sadness—of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him."

These words remind the Christian of God's great redemptive act, the divine outpouring of His love in Jesus Christ, whom God delivered up on behalf of all mankind, showing that "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Here we see love as giving par excellence.

It is not easy to love, especially when we feel the need to be loved ourselves. As Reuel Howe observes: "There is a risk in giving ourselves. Our gift of love may not be accepted,

may not be appreciated, and may even be exploited. In giving love we may be hurt because of the nature of others' responses. But we will be stronger for having given it, and others may be called forth by it. Life cannot remain the same when love has been expressed."

Love as Concern

Because one does not love in general, but must love someone or something, the first characteristic of love's behavior is *concern*. Love manifests this concern by serving and helping others, especially those in need, whether they deserve it or not, whether they are friend or foe.

Take, for example, Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan. Quite obviously, Jesus was trying to point out the necessity of Christian love with this story. Love was already shown in binding up the wound of the beaten stranger. But for the Samaritan to bring this man (a member of a race to whom his own people were hostile) to an inn, to pay in advance for his keep, to stand good for the entire "hospital bill"—this is evidence of love's ultimate concern.

If a mother claimed to love her child but neglected to feed it, to bathe it, and to take care of it, this mother's love would strike us as rather insincere. In like manner, if I said that I loved flowers but I let the flowers in my garden wither and die for lack of water, you would certainly question my love for flowers.

This particular element of love has been strikingly described in the Book of Jonah. God sent Jonah to Nineveh to preach repentance to the people living in that Assyrian capital. After Jonah's attempt to evade his responsibility by running away and through his trying experience in the belly of the great fish, he reluctantly agreed to preach to the people of Nineveh. Although his preaching resulted in the king's proclamation of a great fast to signify the city's repentance, this

did not make Jonah at all happy. Instead, he had hoped that “justice” might have been done. When the plant which was shading Jonah wilted from the heat, Jonah became very angry and God answered him: “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left . . . ?”

The people of Nineveh were Assyrians, not Jews, and in the eyes of Jonah they were *not* his people. But in the sense that the whole creation belongs to God, the Ninevites were indeed God’s people. And His love for them manifested itself as concern.

Sentimental love merely pretends to be concerned about the welfare of the beloved. Such “love” is in reality a pseudo-love, concerned not so much with the love object as the self in relation to the love object. This kind of love Douglas Morgan describes as “a wanton, wallowing love, blindly blanketing every object in its path.”

Sentimental love does not always have the good of the beloved at heart, especially if that good is painful to the so-called loving one. God, who manifested His love for Israel by choosing her to be His own people, also had to strip her bare of her own securities, her own self-sufficiency. He did this with shattering experiences that were as painful to Him as they were to Israel. Yet here is an example of a love that was continually concerned about the welfare of the love object.

Love as Acceptance

Where there is concern in love, there must also be *acceptance*. Love accepts the other person exactly as he is. Isn’t this, after all, the way God loves me, “Just as I am”? People are so easily offended by that which is not pretty in human life

that they place respectability above salvation. As Howe suggests, "Christians ought to be able to see through and behind the dirty and sinful ways in which people live and recognize them as symptoms of a spiritual condition that calls for that which God is trying to give them through us. Christ could see behind the suffering of men, behind their sins, and He was not distracted by what they did. He was concerned for the men first and their behavior last. He knew that if He could reach the man, the behavior would take care of itself."

Love as acceptance creates an atmosphere where the individual is free to be his real self. In contrast to love as acceptance, there is the pseudolove which we call possessiveness. Possessive love does not accept fully the individuality of the love object, nor does it accord him the freedom to act according to his own conscience. Possessive love, rather, tries to mold the love object into what the loving one thinks he ought to become.

Thus we have a love that is interested primarily in reforming, because such a reformation will surely reflect upon the loving one himself. Real love, in contrast to possessive love, is genuinely interested in another, accepting that person as a being of value and worth, and does not show interest in a person merely to enhance his own ends.

Love as Mutuality

A further characteristic of genuine love in human relationships is *mutuality*. Although genuine love "prefers" the other (i. e., would rather seek the other person's advantage than his own), there is also a mutual exchange in a real love relationship. For genuine love includes self-acceptance as well as acceptance of the other person. (Did not Christ say, "Love your neighbor *as yourself*"?)

The love of others and ourselves are not alternatives. One

cannot really love others if he hates himself. Therefore, says Fromm, "the good effects of love are not limited to the loved one but promote the happiness and further development of the loving one as well."

This "mutual" characteristic of love also involves empathy with the loved one. St. Paul describes this aspect of love in his Letter to the Romans, where he exhorts: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." (Rom. 12:15)

Love as mutuality shows itself in relations between whole blocks of people. Love brings together people of opposite backgrounds, nationalities, races, and creeds and welds them into a unity. In the Book of Ephesians love is the ground of the union between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:23), and St. Paul can say to the Christians living at Colosse: "Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (Col. 3:14)

Love as Responsibility

Still another characteristic which manifests itself in the way that love behaves is *responsibility*. Today responsibility is often thought of as a duty, imposed upon one from the outside. But in reality responsibility is an entirely voluntary act; it is my response to another's needs. In the story of Jonah, mentioned before, Jonah did not feel responsible to the inhabitants of Nineveh.

If we are to manifest real love in our relations with others, we cannot dodge the responsibility that loving places upon us, whether the response is one of spending time, energy, resources, or whatever. This is the "bearing" quality of love which St. Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13. It includes much more than merely "putting up" with someone. It is the willingness of one person to bear the responsibility of *being involved* with another.

Love as Forgiveness

It is our nature that when someone hurts us in some way or another we want to “get even.” But genuine love does not retaliate. “Love does no wrong to the neighbor,” says St. Paul. Instead, love forgives. Love tempers justice with mercy.

The love of God for His people Israel is portrayed in vivid and beautiful picture language in the Book of Hosea. Hosea’s marriage with Gomer the harlot is a symbol of God’s relation with Israel. Again and again Israel would go “awhoring” after other lovers. Yet when she turned to God in genuine repentance, God forgave.

Christ spoke of forgiveness as an aspect of love in His conversation with Simon Peter. “How often shall I forgive—seven times?” Peter asked in his attempt to place love within certain defined bounds. And Christ, endeavoring to show Peter the unlimited, forgiving quality of love answered: “Not seven times, but seventy times seven.” (Matt. 18:21-22)

In contrast to justice, which is concerned only with what a person has a right to expect, what he deserves, what is due him, love gives itself wholly and completely without reservation. The supreme example of love as forgiveness is manifested on the cross where the Christ died for the ungodly, “the just for the unjust,” making reconciliation between man and God. God’s love, then, is a forgiving love—brooking even the rebellion, hostility, and animosity of His creation as well as the fickleness and infidelity of those whom He has chosen to be His own.

Nowhere is the behavior of love spoken of so profoundly as in St. Paul’s discussion of love in 1 Corinthians 13. In the J. B. Phillips translation a portion of it reads: “This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience—it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

“Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails.

“Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.”

The comment that St. Paul makes on these verses is especially significant: “When I was a little child I talked and felt and thought like a little child. Now that I am a man my childish speech and feeling and thought have no further significance for me.” Lives lived without love are childish and immature. A love that is real and genuine in relationships with others reveals a spirit growing into the stature of Christ.

Teaching as Dialog

We all tend to teach the way we ourselves were once taught. When teachers followed the dictum, "Children are to be seen but not heard," classroom instruction was teacher-centered with students responding only when asked a direct question. Real involvement of the students was almost nonexistent. Because many of us have come from such an educational experience, we may feel compelled to teach in a similar manner.

But effective learning requires the participation of the student as well as that of the teacher. This is not a new insight. Nearly 2,300 years ago Socrates recognized this truth and used it to good effect. As the lead essay points out, Jesus Himself, the Master Teacher, dialogued with His hearers, giving us some examples which we can use to good effect in our own teaching today.

Some of us recognize the need for genuine dialog but do not know how to get it. Robert Hoyer offers us some helpful insights into structuring our class situation for open dialog. Then Alfred Schmieding provides us with some useful suggestions for stimulating honest dialog that is both meaningful and purposeful.

How Jesus Got People to Respond 3

Dale E. Griffin

“Mr. Brown, I’ve just about had it. I feel as though I’m teaching a group of zombies. My students just sit there, and I have to do all the talking.”

The complaint is very common among church school teachers. They have prepared and organized their teaching material well. They energetically present this material according to plan. But they feel as though their students form a silent wall of unreceptivity and even of resistance. How can they penetrate this wall of silence?

Such teachers might well take some cues from the teaching of Jesus. Of course, the gospels were not meant to be textbooks on the art of teaching. They were meant to communicate the message of salvation in Jesus Christ, which man so desperately needs. Still, in an incidental way we can learn from the gospels the methods which Jesus used to get people to respond.

As a teacher Jesus dealt largely with individuals. Although the gospels record a number of instances in which Jesus addressed large groups, they give much greater attention to Jesus’ ministry to individuals. Even when He addressed masses of people, Jesus spoke about problems and needs which all of His hearers shared as individuals.

One reason why some teachers fail to obtain response from their students may be that they are talking *for* rather than *to* people. The teacher’s attitude may be, “Here is material which must be important because it is in the Bible. You better accept it!”

The wise teacher will try to relate his lesson material to his students as individual persons. For example, he may realize that some class members feel superior to irreligious teen-agers in their community. Mindful of this and given the opportunity provided by an appropriate lesson, the teacher might proceed somewhat in this fashion: "Here in the lesson we have important truths which speak to us today. Our lesson talks about people who rejected Jesus because they believed that they were very good people. Because they felt they were so good, they believed that God owed them a reward for avoiding sin and working for Him. Do you think there are people like that today? Are we church members dearer to God than someone you know who makes flippant remarks about God and Christians?" Pursuing the discussion in this vein, the teacher is more likely to arouse interest and discussion in his class.

In His teaching activity Jesus began where people were and not where He thought they ought to be. Put another way, Jesus answered the questions which people were actually asking. He didn't merely deal with people as individuals; He was also concerned about their individual needs. For example, in dealing with Pharisees who were proud of their moral achievements and who saw no need for God's gracious forgiveness, Jesus did not immediately proclaim the forgiveness which they could obtain in Him. He first helped them see their *need* for God's forgiveness. He pointed out that even though their lives may have been outwardly respectable, their hearts were sinful. Therefore they stood in need of the forgiveness which God offered through Him.

And notice how the Pharisees responded. True, their response was one of rejection of God's grace in Christ. But they did *respond*!

Again, the woman of sin described in John 8:3-11 was already convinced of her guilt before she met Jesus. After Jesus had saved her life from her self-righteous tormentors

He did not lecture her about her wicked life, because this was not her need. She needed the assurance of God's forgiveness rather than a conviction of her sin. Therefore Jesus spoke a word of grace: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."

Following the cue of Jesus the wise church school teacher will prepare and present his lesson material in the light of the *actual* interests and needs of *his* students. To illustrate, while a teacher of boys might well use examples drawn from the sports world, a teacher of girls would be wise to employ illustrations from family life, popular music, etc. More important, he will look for the needs of self-fulfillment and identity which lie behind these interests.

Take another example: A teacher knows that a boy is discouraged because of his poor school achievement. If the lesson is appropriate, the teacher might easily develop a discussion on the variety of gifts which God gives individuals.

In His teaching ministry Jesus usually built on the past experiences of His hearers. He started with the known before moving out into the unknown. In censuring His hearers for failing to see God's acts of salvation in His ministry, Jesus told them: "You can merely glance at the sky or note the wind's direction and you can tell the weather. But in Me God is visiting His people in blessing and judgment, but you can't see" (Luke 12:54-56). Again and again Jesus made Himself understood and stimulated reaction by referring to everyday human experiences to illumine that which He was teaching about the Kingdom.

Likewise the teacher who wants students to respond will be aware of and utilize the experience level of his students. By relating the lesson material to their past experiences the teacher taps the reservoir from which student response can arise.

Jesus employed vivid picture language in His teaching.

Hearers of Jesus' parables could readily visualize the action that took place in the story. Moreover, he touched their emotions so that they placed themselves into the situation described. Almost without realizing it these hearers became so involved in what Jesus had to say that they reacted either in faith or in unbelief.

Sometimes it is difficult to present Christian truths in such a way that they grip the minds and hearts of the learner. "Love," "mercy," "grace," "forgiveness," and other important Christian concepts are abstractions that are difficult to understand. Jesus' hearers may have found it difficult to understand the abstraction "grace" until He portrayed it in the love which the father displayed toward his unworthy, prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). They may have been unable to understand what it means to be eternally separated from God, but they could almost feel for themselves the torment which the rich man was enduring in hell—particularly since they lived in a hot, Oriental climate (Luke 16:23-24). Such illustrations made the abstract concrete, touched the hearts of His hearers, and invited their response.

Jesus made wise use of questions. The lawyer tried to lower God's standards to an attainable level, and so he asked, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus could have given him an immediate and complete answer, but He didn't. Rather, He told the parable of the Good Samaritan. Thus Jesus obtained the emotional involvement of His questioner in the plight of the man "who fell among thieves." The hearer's sympathy was aroused for the victim. He must have "burned" when he heard of the callous indifference to human suffering displayed by the men of religion! With relief and gratitude he listened to Jesus' portrayal of kindness by the Good Samaritan. Having gained the empathy of the rich man for the victim of the thieves, Jesus then posed His question: "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

With his own mouth and with inner conviction the rich man answered, "The one who showed mercy on him." Through His careful use of the question Jesus led the rich man to answer his own question.

Socrates was so adept at using questions for teaching purposes that this instructional technique has become known as the Socratic method. Today psychotherapists use questions to help their patients gain clearer self-understanding and to perceive acceptable solutions to their problems. Questions carefully framed and judiciously used can also help teachers of the Word to elicit student response, so vital for effective teaching.

All of Jesus' techniques aimed at getting response stemming from one concern: His desire to confront individuals with God and His love. Today's Christian teachers who have the same concern will continually strive to make their teaching more personal, vivid, and relevant. When it is, students will respond.

The Sunday Morning Dialog 3

Robert Hoyer

Education, particularly adult education, must be a dialog. Leader and hearer must talk to each other. This does not mean the same thing as discussion. Often discussion is simply talking around on a subject, without real dialog. And often a leader who understands his hearers can use dialog when no one speaks but he. He is talking to the concerns and needs of his hearers; they hear him in areas where they need to hear him.

Practically speaking, dialog does mean discussion. The best way for leaders to know and understand class members is for the members to talk. It is not enough for a leader to say: "The Bible speaks to our needs as human beings, and as long as I'm teaching what the Bible says I am speaking to their needs." The Bible is not always understood when you are studying only small portions in time-limited sessions. And you can never be sure that the hearers understand what you are saying about the Bible.

Recently I spoke to my Bible class of the prophecy-in-type of Israel's exodus from Egypt and said that the prophecy had been fulfilled in Jesus' childhood flight to Egypt. One of the class members asked whether God could not have arranged the fulfillment of the prophecy without killing those children in Bethlehem! This is serious because my failure to make myself clear had given this man a false picture of God. I would never have known it if the class had not been structured to permit dialog.

Often this kind of failure is of long standing. I know many people who believe that God saved the Israelites because they obeyed His commandments. Examples of this sort may be multiplied many times over. This is serious. A teacher's failure to make his Gospel clear has given them a false picture of God. They do not really know our Lord Jesus Christ while they carry such discrepancies in their heart. Dialog and discussion are necessary not only to make the application relevant to life today, but more importantly to portray in truth the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

How do you structure a class to make possible the dialog of faith, to discern the mistaken picture and the clouded Gospel? It is not a simple process or an easy task. There is no gimmick that you can use next Sunday to change a teaching situation into a faith-sharing one, to make the monolog over into dialog. It is not an immediate thing; it requires

a long association in trust and fellowship. Here are some suggestions concerning the structure.

1. The key word is *trust*. The adult must be accepted as he is; he no longer cares to risk being rejected. Unless he knows that what he says will be accepted and seriously considered, he will not say it. No matter what he discloses of himself, the personal relationship of love, respect, and Christian fellowship between leader and class must remain untarnished. No statement may ever be treated with contempt or condemnation, even in the process of correcting it.

This is a chief concern of the leader. Not only must he himself prove trustworthy in the dialog, he must affect the class to show the same trustworthiness. If another member of the class endangers the dialog by showing a sharp condemnation, the leader must be willing to embrace tentatively the erring opinion, until dialog is restored.

This kind of trust is learned only through experience. You cannot simply tell a class they can trust you with their problems. In most cases the experience will have to be gained in little things before the deeper concerns of faith are exposed.

2. Another key word is *interest*. The members of your class are not just hearers. They are mechanics, truck drivers, physicians, entomologists, warehouse stockmen, housewives, nursery school teachers, or a hundred other things. You will have to know what they are and be interested in it. You should know their hobbies. You should know the background of their faith and religious training. Then use this knowledge in your illustrations and your questions. Be sympathetic to the particular problems for the Christian life which vocation, avocation, and background represent.

Your interest will bear fruit in unexpected ways. Beside helping to make your application relevant to individual members, your interest will maintain that fellowship of concern that makes dialog possible. No adult will easily trust another who is not interested in him.

3. A third key word is *time*. It is not really important for you to cover a given amount of subject ground before the closing bell rings. It is important that the Word of God be declared to the heart and the whole being of the people around you. The number of truths studied is not as important as the clear understanding of the truths that you do consider. When members of the class have a concern, when some truth of God or application of His Word needs closer examination, take the time to do this. If progress in the subject matter is necessary, you can usually summarize the principal points of the lesson in the last five minutes of the session.

Sometimes you will have to break off discussion of an individual's problem—when it is not really related to your lesson, when the rest of the class is not interested, when one person has a private ax to grind. Here are two criteria to help you decide when to stop the discussion. Ask: "Do those discussing the issue *understand* one another?" If class members understand but disagree, it is usually safe to move on. Ask: "Is the picture of God in the minds of the class clear and true?" If it is, you may move on. If it is not, that should be your central concern.

4. It is surprising what a difference some minor technical arrangements will make. Seat your class around a table if at all possible, even if it is a large circle of tables. Let everyone *feel* himself on an equal level with everyone else. A table to put your hands on and hide behind removes a great deal of subconscious physical threat. A casual volunteer group like your class needs this protection. The only place where an open circle is valid is in the living room of a home, where people are used to it.

Use names. You will have to strike a balance between frank friendship and respect. If a man's name is Bob and the others call him that, then call him Bob.

5. Build up the habit of self-expression in your class. As

a leader you are in a peculiar position; the class members will not disclose themselves to you as easily as they will to one another, even if you are a layman and one of them. If you get one member of the class to answer the problem of another, a first hurdle is crossed. Give this a chance to happen by withholding your own comment, by giving an incomplete answer, or by encouraging someone else to answer. Don't *tell* another member of the class to answer.

You do not need to answer every question as soon as it appears. Sometimes it takes a little discussion to develop the answer. Let the discussion continue even though you know an answer that will stop it, in order to build the realization of freedom. Step in with your contribution only before the subject is completely lost or changed.

6. Share the problems of your class members. Be sure you understand them and the reasons behind them. Then be willing to admit that they trouble you too, or have troubled you at one time, if this is true. If you appear to be above the turmoil and the battle, your class members will be afraid to disclose their weaknesses to you.

Express your own problems in faith. If you act like a man without doubt or anxiety, you are acting like a man without need for the class or for prayer or study or repentance. If you act like a man without sin, you are acting like a man without forgiveness. And you will have nothing in common with your class.

7. Before the class session, talk weather and politics and sports with the members. If you want them to share one world—the world of faith in God—with you, then share all their worlds with them. Know and share their anxieties on the job, in the home, with relatives. The most successful leaders have been successful first in little things.

After the class session, stick around. Be available to talk more weather or to extend the class discussion with

individuals. You will often learn after class the mistakes you made during class. Listen and look as you call on class members. Not to bring up the other man's concerns—that's his job—but to understand them when he expresses them.

8. Don't be afraid to try new methods—role playing, individual report, panel discussion, the statement to shock complacency. But don't use these methods as gimmicks to get facts learned. Rather use them to force a correlation of the lesson with life, to bring members into personal involvement with the truths of God. Use them to make class members want to express their concerns.

Finally, you won't succeed. At least, I hope you won't succeed as well as you wish to. Your concern for the class should always exceed your capacity. Your aspiration should always be more than your reach is. You will continue to have reason to pray before you go to class. You will continue to have reason for repentance and pain as you prepare.

3 Group Interaction Can Teach

Alfred Schmieding

And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.
Luke 2:46-47

Learning through interaction or group participation did not wait for the 20th century in order to come into being. Already in the early preparatory stage of His life on earth

the Savior taught and learned through interaction with the learned men. But this can be said: In recent years there has been a much greater emphasis in education on the rights and freedom of the individual and on the educative power of this freedom exercised in group discussion.

By group instruction we can sometimes attain values that are difficult to get in any other way. I don't mean to belittle lectures, storytelling, asking questions, teaching memory work, or visual aids. But it is easy to confuse such methods with learning. Because they emphasize teacher activity and responsibility, their use may result in little actual learning.

This is especially true of the learning we want to take place in the church school. This involves a change of behavior, or the gaining of a different point of view or attitude, as well as a broadening of knowledge. As long as the pupil feels, "I am being told," he is apt to regard what goes on in the classroom as the teacher's job rather than his own. His attitudes and conduct may be left relatively unaffected.

Group Interaction Begins with the Teacher

The title of this article suggests that class interaction can be instructive. Why, then, do we begin with the teacher?

The change of behavior in the broadest sense begins with the teacher, *but it doesn't end there*.

One of the most difficult aspects of attaining a dynamic group discussion is for the teacher to shift the focus of attention from himself to the group. This is not easy. We all like to be the center of attention. Almost no one likes to be ignored or bypassed in group activity. But if this is true of teachers, it is equally true of those they teach.

Experience and actual tests show that as class members take a leading part in the discussion, the instructional process becomes a fascinating and an enjoyable experience for them. The thoughts and ideas they bring to the surface may be

amazing and at times in error. But erroneous ideas, false conceptions, and even hidden fears and resentments are not put out of existence by suppressing them or ignoring them.

But when teachers shift the focus of attention from themselves to the group, the listeners have a tendency to become bored and impatient or indifferent. Sometimes they move out of the circle to the rear of the room and give evidence that they are tense and uneasy. This is, of course, an error in the opposite direction.

As the group engages in interactive instruction, the teacher is (or should be) the most intent listener and the most interested participant. From time to time, as there is need for it, he joins in the group discussion. Still, he remains the teacher. He makes sure that all members of the group have an opportunity to express their views. He summarizes, interprets, and evaluates what has been said. He tries to keep the discussion from becoming a competition between himself and the class or between individuals in the class. To say that a class member becomes the teacher when he takes over the leadership for a moment is misleading.

Ways to Get Discussion

How can we help bring about effective group discussion? Let it be said that this can be done from the kindergarten to the graduate school. That the approach and level will differ is self-evident. Here are three teaching techniques conducive to group interaction:

The Pretend-Guest Method. A group of 10-year-old boys and girls has just heard or read the story of the Good Samaritan. The teacher says: "This morning Pete is our pretend guest. Our pretend guest says, 'The Samaritan was in danger when he helped the poor man. He should have hurried through the country as fast as possible to protect himself. God wants us to protect ourselves.'"

After a brief pause the teacher continues, "What do you say to our pretend guest's point of view?"

In most cases the group will not respond immediately. A good problem requires time for reflection. The teacher has to learn to wait. He may repeat Pete's position with an explanation, but he is not tricked into solving the problem for the class.

After the children have responded individually the teacher remains neutral, while Pete is expected to defend his point of view. The teacher draws out points not clear, encourages the timid, and reflects and mirrors what the group has to say. Frequently the children will ask the teacher for information or an opinion. Who could ask for a better teaching situation?

The teacher guides the discussion in three ways:

1. He tries to get wide participation within the group.
2. He helps the group to think through the problem.
3. He aids or tries to aid the group in arriving at a consensus. A child may summarize the discussion.

If the teacher feels that a point must be added or a correction made to bring the conclusion into more direct harmony with Scripture, this can be done briefly.

Teachers must not expect immediate success with the pretend-guest method. Sometimes it takes several periods to free the group (and the teacher as well) from habits that may have been established in more restricted classroom situations. The pretend-guest approach lends itself particularly well to children below the high school level.

The One-Question Technique. This method will work well with upper grade or high school youth. The members of the class read the selection for the day in the Bible class guide or in the Bible itself. Each member is asked to write out one good question relating to the section read.

When the class members have finished their study and noted their questions, each one in turn states his question

and leads a discussion of it. If the teacher has the patience to wait, he will often be surprised how involved the whole group becomes. As discussion leader he will remain neutral for a time, his task being to elicit, to organize, and to mirror what has been said. But before discussion of the question is concluded, the group tries to reach agreement regarding the answer.

Of course, the teacher isn't left out. He may raise a question or make a comment to bring out a point of emphasis, to sharpen thinking, and to keep the whole discussion in harmony with Scripture. And class members may ask, "Teacher, what is your question today?"

The Team Approach. A third way to involve a group is to appoint two or three leaders to prepare for the discussion at the next meeting of the class. The leaders work out questions they will ask the group, and do research for ideas and material that will help them initiate discussion.

When the class meets, the leaders are responsible for keeping the discussion going and for holding the group to the subject. One of the leaders may serve mainly as a recorder who reflects and summarizes.

At each meeting of the class a new team of two or three leaders is chosen until all members of the group have had an opportunity to lead the discussion. Experience shows that having more than three leaders tends to dissipate a purposeful and pointed discussion. In fact, two leaders do better than three.

Here again the teacher is and remains the formal leader of the group. His business is to observe, to coach, to correct, and to contribute. His more extensive knowledge of Scripture and his wider Christian experience make him especially valuable for the function of applying the Word to the problems of his pupils.

Group interaction is in keeping not only with sound

principles of learning but also—even more important—with the spirit of Christian love. But dynamic group discussion doesn't come easy. The teacher must have patience and be willing and ready to work at it, always remembering that good leadership demands a sharing of the leadership with the group.

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***Well,
what
is
teaching?***



Teaching is a reflection:

"The instructor teaches more effectively what he *is* than what he says."

Teaching is a process:

"How the teacher responds to his students is even more important than what he says to them."

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